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Wade Armstrong

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WVC-C-5
D. Wade Armstrong
July 25, 1984
HISTORY OF CEREDO



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DATE

7/25/84

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7-25/84

J. D. Dube
(Signature - Witness)

D. Wade Armstrong
July 25, 1984
HISTORY OF CEREDO

WVC-C-5

West Virginia Communities - Ceredo

WVC-C-5

An Oral Interview with: D. Wade Armstrong, Pastor

Conducted by: Jim Deeter

Date of Interview: July 25th, 1964

Transcribed by: Crystal A. Beverage

Typist: Gina Kehali Kates

COMPLETED

Jim: This is a conversation with Dr. Wade Armstrong, the pastor of First Baptist Church in Leno, and this is Jim Deeter, interviewing Dr. Armstrong. And this is uh, a tape for the Oral History department at Marshall University and uh, partial fulfillment for the course history 580, History of Leno. This conversation is being recorded at his home in Leno on July the 25th, 1984. Dr. Armstrong, I would just like to ask you first, if you would, to just uh, tell me a little bit about yourself, your background, uh, where you grew up, where you went to school, your family, and so forth: just share those kinds of things if you would.

Wade: Jim, I'm a native of Arkansas, I grew up on a farm. My dad was a farmer and a coal miner combination. I uh, received Christ when I was 10, after having been a church member 3 years prior to that. And uh, 3 or 4 years before I received Christ I knew I was being called to preach. I didn't answer his call until between my sophomore and junior years in high school, and started preaching immediately with the help from a associational missionary who took me around to various churches. This was near Fort Smith, Arkansas, west of Little Rock. When I finished high school uh, by the way, I became pastor my junior/senior years in high school: I was pastor of churches. And I went on to (inaudible)...Baptist university which is the baptist college for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. And uh, did 4 years there and was pastor of churches all the way through college. Then I went to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky and was pastor all during my uh, graduate years there (phone ringing in background) and uh, got the first degree in three years and the record second degree the next year and about 3 years later well, I did the uh, work required of resident doctrinal students, which was 2 years resident work on campus, and uh, passed my oral exam and went on to become pastor in Oklahoma City. And uh, took leaves of absences uh, uh, once every two years until I finished a thesis and got my final uh, Ph.D degree in 1955, from Oklahoma City I became (inaudible)...another Oral Center and from there went on to be director of evangelism for the California Baptist, Southern Convention. And worked at that for about seven years. And then when my wife died and I had young children, I remarried, I became pastor in Los Angeles and then in Sacramento. Then in '71, I began to lecture missions in West Palm Beach, Florida and after serving about 9 years there, I became director of missions in Durham, North Carolina. And uh, there my second wife died of cancer and uh, when I remarried this time we decided to come to ministry in West Virginia. I became first to work with the state staff and the (inaudible)...of evangelism and stewardship and after 6 months from the middle of 1982, and to the end of 1982, I served all over the state. In the meantime, I became interim pastor here at First Baptist Leno and uh, preached on weekends and on Wednesday nights, when I did not have other appointments out of the state. But the word began to open doors here uh, and around of his spiritual awakening among the people and uh, among (inaudible)...people and it became an unusual flood of lost people attending and being saved. In a church that was well, over 90 years of age at that time, and had never as far

as I could tell from the history I have read up, been an outstanding evangelistic church, suddenly becoming alive and I accepted up, rather easily some very substantial changes, agreed to become an outreaching body. When they up, first asked me to consider being pastor I felt the Lord didn't bring me to West Virginia to be a pastor and up, so I turned 'em down. They went on pursuing others and finally called a man, but one week before he was to arrive, he up, accepted a teaching job instead. So they turned back to me and in the meantime the Lord told me that he did want me here as pastor and I think part of what he used to convince me was up, a big crust of evangelism that he was making possible. It's usual Jim, that here in a community that's really hemmed in and up, on a human level we'd say is nearly impossible to grow a church here. Now, we have the Ohio River on one side and Big Sandy Creek and Kentucky on the other side; then we have the airport on the other side, then we have a vacant land between us and Huntington and growing fast like you find most churches that grow rapidly because up, the community is growing rapidly at least that helps in the growth. But the Lord up, for his own reason chose to touch this people at this time and a church that have averaged between 10 and 20 probably per year in baptizing up, suddenly began to reach a lot of people for the size church that it is. And up, this July I've been up, associated with the church 2 years, year and a half, as pastor and half a year as interim pastor and there's been a little over 200 professions of faith in these 2 years. And we baptize a little over 150 of those 200. So his up, made a remarkable turnaround in evangelism. We've done several things up to Lord used to do this first of all, I asked the deacons to revive the family minister plan that they'd had some years ago, but never did really get active in where every deacon has a number of families that are his families to visit up, about once a quarter. I asked them to help each other and to take one zone of families per week and visit every family in that zone. Every deacon and wife would participate with a deacon and wife who was head of that zone and ask every home where they went, besides having bible reading and prayer and encouraging them that way to ask them if they would come and be the deacon and wives' guest for dinner next Sunday. And be recognized at the morning service and to bring all their family and any relatives and friends they wanted to. And many of those people who had not been attending began to come and up, several of the names of the lost members and they came with the families. And up, it was good fellowship at these lunches that immediately followed. It took up, about 14 weeks to go, 10-13. I forgot how many were active deacons or at that time we have 17 now. There were probably about 9 at that time. But that helped us to win a lot of people. Then we put on 13 week Sunday School high tennis campaign and told 'em that the old frame building that will be torn down will not (inaudible)...it was built and the only building next to them they've ever known because it's the only building the church has ever had they've expanded twice but it's the same building. It will have given them a picture of that on the plate if they attend 12 or 13 Sundays in a row, 3 months, counting in Sunday School. Whereas up, the Sunday school had been running 100 (inaudible)...extra Sundays around 200. Uh, we averaged well over

200 is Sundays in a row. That got some new people present and uh, some people who had not been attending much by this time were kind of getting in the habit of attending. And there are some habits that are good. You usually think of habits as bad, but that's not necessarily so. (un-huh) Hebrews 10:25 says that do not have a habit of forsaking the assembling of yourselves together. So uh, the deacons working and then the Sunday school leadership beginning to work, and the two put together made uh, I think a lot of difference. On Wednesday nights, we started uh, fellowship dinners on Wednesday nights, and in connection with our Wednesday night services we also had outreach visitation. Instead of asking the people to give another night during the week, we'd either go on Wednesday night. We'd have a short bible reading, prayer time bible study, prayer time, and then the team would (inaudible)... We sent them out in teams of three, one man and 2 women, or 2 women and one man. A lady at they door comes more to opening at night. If a woman opens the door and sees the woman standing there in her door, so all the people who are not numming, we are returning their visits, and besides going to people we found about who had never attended. We have a way at our church of finding out who's present. We don't ask visitors to stand up or raise their hands, or we ask all of our members to stand in their honor. So, everyone who's seated we know is not a member, and the second thing we do we ask everybody to fill out a registration envelope. The front side is for guest, and besides name, address, phone, it has two very important questions, it says are you sure you're saved, and it has three places, one of which will be them, it says yes, undecided, no, and (inaudible).... And that lets us know in their own handwriting how they feel about their own salvation. The next question says are you interested in joining this church, yes, undecided, no, and we see them move from not to undecided to yes, but also what this does it make a person suddenly face up to himself when he fills out his envelope, how do I really stand? One young man who's now a deacon, in fact, he is the husband of our secretary, Rae, you've talked with (un-huh). He said this made him face up to the fact that he was lost. (huh) And there Sunday by Sunday, he'd been coming to this church 10 years, nobody would come and witness to him, he said, they'd come and talk to him about ball games and the, then invite him to church, but when he started filling out that envelope, are you sure you're saved, he faced up to the fact that he knew he was not saved, and got on (inaudible)...and saw (inaudible)...minister of youth and I called in his name and before I accepted the call I started to sense something, the Lord had him ready, and he grew rapidly and was made a deacon then. There was this one example of (inaudible)....that faced up to the fact that they were lost when they filled out the card, and you don't have to wonder who the woman was in the pink dress or the man in the green tie that tell 'ya in their own handwritings who they were and how they feel about themselves spiritually, and the fact then on the other side of that envelope, the backside is for our own members, and I told our members uh, this inner circle first, why we need to do this. That if they'd fill out their envelopes, people around them would fill theirs out, uh...so even though it would get tiresome to do it Sunday morning, and Sunday night, and Sunday morning and Sunday

nights, Sunday in and Sunday out. We had a reason for doing that beyond themselves. Of course, one thing it made them face up to themselves. We've had several church members saved and across American's that's going on among churches that become alive evangelistically they find several of their own members trying to acknowledge I've never come to Christ. We had a deacon who came, received Christ and was baptized (inaudible)...with the New Testament believers baptism. He'd had uh, mental problems and I think part of it is that he'd been a lost man. (hmm) We have a woman, very fine person who's a widow now, retired school teacher. Highly respected in this community, who one night walked out of the choir where she was singing and said, pastor, may I have the microphone? And I said, yeah, Ruth, sure. And she said, I want to confess Christ openly over this microphone. I've been a member of this church for many, many years. I've tried to lead a good life, I've taught the Bible, I've sung in the choir, but I've never personally asked Christ to be my Savior and I ask him right now to save me. (hmm) And she made her confession right there and was baptized. And we had other church members who came and other deacons' wives in fact, two deacons' wives who came and said I don't care what people think about this, that I've been a deacon's wife all this time and I wanna be sure I'm in Christ and I'm receiving him and I'm asking him now, save me. I remember joining church but I never remember asking him to save me. So, revival was on, we've done some other things to get lost people present. We started an annual recognition of various groups who work in and out of the cities. We recognized all the fireman (hmm), all the policemen, we recognized the city council people, and the mayor's of the two cities of Ceredo and Kenova. And that gets them and their families present, we write them and our deacons telephone them and then uh, we have a, one year we had just a fellowship affair after church with just cake and cookies and something to drink, but this year we gave them a meal. Fellowship meal following the morning service. And then uh, we recognized the teachers in North Wayne County elementary, middle, high school, and vocational schools. And wrote them all letters. And many of them came. And filling out the registration envelopes, we found out about these people, who was uh, active for Christ already and who were not. So we'd done various things to help expose the gospel to lost people inside the church building and then we had uh, 70 people at a time going out on Wednesday night in this visitation (hmm), now it's unusual for a big church to have 70 people as we both know but because we organized and asked a person will you head up a team, will you get two people to work with you. We enlisted all these and said yes, I will, and we had a starting time we had a stopping time. We'd only go about 3 months at a time with the visitation and uh, this got out in homes of people. So it began to spread all around that something unusual was taking place and it was so unusual that some people when they'd have 'ta miss, they'd telephone and say what happened...(laughter)...on Sunday. And then the tone of our service uh, changed to, from uh, what many people think is worship, became a celebrated type of worship service, the kind that the Bible spells out that will be in Heaven. And so the people coming in and sitting quietly, listening to soft organ

music, they now come in laughing, chatting and talking with one another and shaking hands with any visitor they see and having a good time for about 15 minutes before the choir marches in. And uh, I preach expositively, I don't preach very often a topical sermon. And uh, people are now bringing their Bibles and following so it's a, it's a teaching/preaching type what I'm doing. Very opposite to what I used to do. But the Lord will use that, too. He has said that his word would return void, and uh, we're finding that to be true. We provide Lord's print, the New Testament and uh, present English, today's English version that we use because the people can understand it. And the many people we cannot take for granted know anything about the Bible really. And they certainly can't understand the old English that they don't speak any more very well. So uh, like this very last Sunday morning, by the ends of the pew's laying down the floor were stacks of these large New Testaments and when I got up to read the word, I said now, reach down you who's sitting in the aisles and pick those up and pass them to the people who doesn't already have his and I said to the people, there are so many translations today in the English language that we need to use one so that you can follow my preaching much more easier when I point out a word in a certain verse it will be the same word in your translation if you have the same one. And so uh, nearly everyone then will have a copy of God's word in his hand when I'm preaching. Another good change that has happened to help us to reach people has been in the realm of music. I've talked already about education and how the Sunday's has grown. I said before I leave education I guess, well, talk about the fact that uh, we felt like people need to have a foundation in their lives to go spiritually after they were saved. And even if they'd been saved several years. Those who attend a normal Bible class in our Sunday school's don't learn a great deal uh, they get some good atmosphere but as far as actual Bible knowledge and so on, their examination shows they don't know much. So we felt like on Sunday night we should have a church training time an hour before the evening preaching now in which we gave uh, foundation (inaudible)...that would help a Christian to grow. Such as uh, beginning to start reading the word every day have a time to do it, have a prayer light, begin to grow a prayer light and uh, make a list of those uh, you knows who are lost and start praying for them. And begin to memorize some of God's word and then to know some principles that will help you to grow. And so we uh, got a piece of literature to use as a Bible guide called "Survival Kit for new Christians".

Jim: uh-hun.

Wages: But we asked the whole to study and we enrolled about 250 people on Wednesday uh, Sunday nights where many churches don't ever open their doors on Sunday nights. We got that many people enrolled and the attendance I guess, ran around close to 200, by having many classes and giving the person who was going to teach the class a list of names and paying call all these they're the ones who oughta be in your class. And we had a lot of spiritual growth going on in those 10 weeks that we went through that survival kit. In a few weeks we'll be starting Survival Kit

number 2, that's just now come out. It's a personal friend of mine who has written these and he's a very solid, conservative man of God; he's done a good job. But this gave some foundation. This book also went into personal witnessing on how to write out your testimony, how to make it clear to lost people and how to give it to them. And they practiced this with one another in these classes and some people who'd had never least in public prayer before began to pray in these small classes on Sunday nights. And those who'd never had a time of uh, reading the word of God and prayer in their lives began to have a set time that they do this, either personally or as family or both then. So, generally there have been several things the Lord put together that's helped the people to grow spiritually, helped them to get interested in people other than themselves. As my personal belief, one has not been thoroughly evangelized until he becomes an evangelist, and that he doesn't grow, strongly until he becomes interested in something greater and outside himself, and Jesus told us what that was, and what we call the great commission at the end of the Book of Matthew. Commission means command, and in the Greek language there's only one command in the great commission. We read it in English: it looks like the word going and baptizing and teaching our commands, but they aren't. They're participles in the Greek language, and they are not commands. Their only hands end on the command, and help you carry out the command. The one command Jesus gave the great commission and he gave it in the imperative sense is make disciples, and I try to teach this to our people. So, one Sunday morning when the house was packed, after the deacons had already agreed and adopted the number one priority of the church and to recommend it to them, we had it out, this printed out priority, that said the number one priority of the First Baptist Church of Cerezo will be to win people to Jesus, and it started out about 14 different steps. This means it'd be the first priority with a staff member, so, when we interview perspective staff member, it's one of the things we strongly talk to him or her about. Are you a soul winner? Are you willing to learn how to witness? And will you do this? And we ask them to visit a certain number of prospects every week, and to report on these to the pastor. It says that deacons will participate in outreach visitations that Sunday School leaders will, and that this will be the purpose of a ...for all ambassadors for boys and girls auxiliaries for girls and whatever we are having that the purpose of that will be to win people to Jesus, and uh, church is often (inaudible)...of standing, an anonymous vote that doesn't mean that we are winning all that many as we can or should, but we are winning more and the people are more conscience of what the church is for. About this time I was writing a book for the Sunday School board and the southernized convention uh, on church growth and evangelism, the title a finally adopted by the book was Evangelistic Growth and Act 1 & 2 because I took the first 2 chapters of Acts to establish most of the principles that we find in the New Testament Church for winning people to Christ, and the uh, I was preaching the (inaudible)...messages, as well as writing them through the week for the book. And I carried the people through the studying Acts and lets them see why the first church win so many people so rapidly and we picked our first principles.

and they acknowledge with me that principles don't change, methods do, principles don't; they're the same with every generation. One of the principles we found was uh, prayer. First Church did a lot of praying on the principles of personal witnessing. Every day the Bible talks about them going house to house, and it talked about the public preaching and the kind that it was, persuasive preaching and penetrating and scriptural and evangelistic. Many churches, if they're going to have long hair music and anthems that people can't understand and sermons that uh, are not pointed to lost people, they do it on Sunday morning, but Sunday morning is about the only time in America that lost people go to church. So, I said to our people, let's get to what's going on and when do our people come, and they all acknowledged with me if we have them they're usually on Sunday morning an evangelistic service, and Sunday night maybe more of a teaching service to our own people, so it hasn't been unusual, the unusual thing now is not when people come down the aisle, it's when nobody comes down the aisle. I'm glad it's turned around that way, that's the unusual time when we don't have open decisions. We're beginning in August, uh, Jim, something that I think will help this church and help some lives in this church, all the rest of their lives will begin what is called continuous witnessing training, that's turning the _____ convention of CNI (Continuous Witness Training). It's a 13 week training program of training a person how to personally witness to others. It requires uh, a 2-hour class a week, it requires a good amount of memorization of the scriptures, it requires a memorizing of _____. And an outline of how to give a gospel and how to bring the person to a decision. And uh, to take to this one must promise that once he enrolls, he won't drop out and he will be there all 13 times. It's a 2-hour study and then they go out and visit for an hour and a half, the team of three. One is the teacher and 2 are the learners. We're starting out with a staff taking special training, then we're going to come back from these teams and for 13 weeks this fall, there will be 18 of us then, 6 of us trained and then we'll go out in teams of 3 like the 18. At the end of the 13 weeks, 13 weeks, the 18 people as (inaudible)...will all know how to lead a person to Christ who wants to be saved. They will know how to lead him to Christ. Next spring those 18 people will take 2 a piece and for 13 weeks they will train and you get 3 times 18, you're getting a good many people involved. Then next fall all of those will take 2 a piece and we'll go again. I'm looking for the time by the time we center on our new team there will be a 100 new people in this church who will have a lifestyle of evangelism, to any day of their life under situations where the holy spirit places them with a person who would like to be saved, they can win him to Christ. And I feel in the New Testament the main emphasis is not on the public preaching, but on the public preachings, and (inaudible)...
END OF SIDE 1.

SIDE 2

Wage:...I hope in the First Baptist Church of Ceredo, West Virginia, that where as (inaudible)...in most of our Southern Baptist churches and in several others of other groups that Christ

is really the priest in the pulpit. There's not much personal witnessing from the pew, and if their lost and not present and the preacher preaches an evangelistic sermon they cannot be saved, and they're not going to come unless we go and the church has to be ...is ...ceases to be a coming organization and become a going organism, filled with the life of the holy spirit, and this is what the New Testament teaches about the church. It's my attention which I pointed out in the book I wrote, the two kinds of churches. There are maintenance churches and there are mission churches. Churches on maintenance and churches on mission. A church on maintenance is a church that maintains a building, they maintain services, and they maintain some routines, but that is the end of what they do, is just to maintain. (inaudible)...some organizations and some programs. They don't have much intention beyond that, and therefore, don't do much beyond that, and they only remain alive because someone prior to that had something else in mind instead of just maintenance, but as the church went along it just became a maintenance institution. The churches of rich people are churches who are on mission, the mission that Jesus gave his church to make disciples. Now they seek to turn everything they do...to missions, like Jesus told us to do. I do not believe there is a dichotomy or a battle between growing as a Christian, or disciplining Christians and uh, witnessing to lost people. I think they go hand in hand. And I do not believe there's any real spiritual growth that doesn't have for it's purpose witnessing to the gospel of Christ. Well, this is what he taught us. He said that's why he's gonna give us the holy spirit, because we were witnesses. And by him we'd have power. And this is the purpose of the one who lives on the inside of us, to help us to be powerful in witnessing, then that's sure the purpose I want the individual, the collective individuals who make the church. So these are some of the things, then, that the Lord has led us to put together, that has helped this church to turn around. I'd like to pay tribute to a group of men, called deacons. Not one of them that I know has ever bowed his neck against the leadership of the pastor, or against an outreach ministry, but they've all been just right for it. And this has been an unusual thing, I think, because usually when a church has been set a certain way for years upon years, to suddenly in a space of few months, to turn all the way around, and cease to be a church on maintenance to become a church on mission, that there are people that don't understand this, who don't want to understand this, they don't want their church to be that way. Well, these men, thank God, have not been that kind of men. Uh, they participated in the outreach ministries, they pray for me, they feel a part of the team, and uh, their influence among the membership then, that means a great deal in our going in this direction. We try to get the church to take a rather long look, by having some seminars I guess you could call them, planned programs of growth, or planned directions--long range planning. Uh, in which we try to look, not only to the next year, but to several years ahead, where should this church be and how should be try to get there? I think this has helped some. We have not done any of these things as well as they could have or should have been done, but the fact that we've done them some the holy spirit has

blessed and used the people and used these methods and so on, to get out the gospel to many and to help individuals to begin to grow as children of God. Maybe you have some questions you'd like to ask.

Jim: Well, you've been a pastor, well, you've had pastoral experience for how many years did you say?

Wade: Well, this August and you can help me find out. I started preaching in 1937 (okay), in August, 1937, seven from fourteen is seven, so it looks like I'm gonna celebrate my 47th year in the ministry (that sounds about right). Now I was un, '57 to un, '63 I was director of evangelism, so I wasn't a pastor in California at that time. So that's un, about seven years out there. And then I was nine years in Florida, that's 16 years, and I was three years in North Carolina, that's nineteen years, so 19-20 years of my 47 years I was what we call denominational (mmm-hmm, so about 27...) about 27 years I've been a pastor.

Jim: Do you ...when you first contacted, or were contacted, was contacted by 1st Baptist here at Ceredo, un, you mentioned in your comments that you found them to be a church or maintenance, you meant by that that they were just where they had been for several years?

Wade: Yeah, they were just maintaining services and property and programs.

Jim: Can you give me some idea of, based on your past experience, or your years in the ministry, why that takes place? Is there any explanation?

Wade: I think it takes place positively or negatively in the pulpit. God's work centers around his leaders, I think the New Testament teaches that every church needs a pastor. He's called a bishop in the New Testament, that means overseer. It's like Truman said, 'The Buck stops here'. And it does, with a pastor. If he's an outreaching person in his un, spiritual philosophy and if he's a personal soul winner, and if he preaches this way and preaches the scripture to the people, they begin to walk the same direction. (inaudible)...churches like the pastor, same may become like him more quickly than that. But if at the end of seven years the church is not winning anyone to Christ, you can pretty well say the pastor's not winning anyone to Christ. The church is not an outreaching church and you can pretty well say he's not an outreaching pastor. So I think number one has to do with who the pastor is. Now, there's no two people alike, as we know, there's no two pastors alike. And that's not saying we're supposed to fit a certain groove, but we all have the same commission. And un, the scripture still says to the pastor do the work of an evangelist. So, that's mandatory, and imperative. And I don't think a pastor has any choice about it. If he's gonna be true to the New Testament, because the easiest thing to avoid in the flesh, the devil sees to that, the world about us sees it and many Christians about us. It's all opposed to where we are in

Christianity in America today. So you have to...have to become abnormal to become normal in American Christianity. (mmm) because our normalcy uh, we have not recognized as being sub-normal but when you become normal, you're abnormal to most people. It's normal to witness for Christ according to the New Testament. So I think uh, well, that last pastor (inaudible)...said to me, I'm not a preacher really. And while he was here he took courses up to Marshall because he wanted to be in the counseling ministry and a chaplain in the hospital, and uh, so he didn't feel himself strong in the pulpit. But I think though we don't have the same emotional buildup, and a lot of things about us aren't the same. We have the same gospel, and uh, the same word of God, and I think with some real compassion given by the holy spirit, and given by concentrating by the state of person outside of Christ, that any Christian and certainly a God-called preacher, can preach with passion and desire, that can be seen and felt in his appearance and in his message. God can use us to bring people under conviction. He doesn't have to be an orator. Uh, but many pastors don't try to preach that way. But I feel the New Testament preachin' was that way. And that this is the normal preaching that we ought to have. And then it must go from the pastor to the leaders, in Baptist Churches, as you know, this would be deacons and Bible teachers in the Sunday school, principally. And if these will walk with the pastor in the direction of evangelism, then many others begin to do this. We found the Lord doing here what uh, he did in the New Testament churches: I believe in the 14th chapter of Acts it tells of Cornelius, a gentile here in the gospel, by Peter and others, but when they arrived at his home, he had congregated there, not only his immediate family, but many others that made the house (inaudible). In the New Testament for house, meant a lot more than his own personal family. All the men that worked under him, and their families and so on, hard to tell how many he had present. And uh, not only Cornelius but those other people received Christ and were filled with the holy spirit. And the 14th chapter of Acts it tells of the Philidian jailer, and talks about his house, which would be more than his own immediate family. There would be several others. And uh, in the same 14th chapter of Acts it talks about a woman who's heart the Lord opened, Lydia, and her whole house came to Christ. This would be several of the women who were working with her in the business and the families and so on. Well, here, we have found that God's saving one or two people, and whole group of other friends and relatives begin to come and begin to be saved. That's one of the things that helped us to reach some more people beyond the ordinary bounds of the church. They brought 'em in from Huntington, from across the river, in Ohio and Kentucky. Because uh, as you know, statistics show people go to church number one reason because some person asked them. (mmm) Not because where the church is located, not because of who the preacher is, not because of the nicety of the buildings. They were asked by someone in that church. So as these and by the way, we helped them to ask because when a person is saved and becomes a candidate for baptism, we talk to him or her prior and see, I get all their family present to see you baptized, ask all your friends, ask your grandmother and granddaddy, everybody you can.

And we tell 'em why, not just to see you baptized but they'll hear the gospel. But they might never come unless you say, "I'm gonna be baptized, will you come to see me baptized"? And out it that way. (mmm-hmm) I've been thinking of printing up invitations for them to hand out. Episcopalians do this on the stand when they're going to so-called baptize a baby. They have printed invitations sent to their friends, and families, come see their baby baptized. So, here, we baptize at the beginning of a service and make it a part of the service. And the lights go down and we walk 'em down to the water and the choir has marched in and the deacons has marched in or are sitting in the front rows, and uh, I explain that water doesn't wash away any sins, that the blood of Christ does that. But that this person is being buried and raised, (inaudible)...to save sinners. And we try to preach the gospel from the water, as well as let them see the gospel. And uh, I introduce the person and I say, uh, if they've told me who's present, their family, I call out their names if I can remember, and say, I understand so and so is here, will you stand up? We want to recognize you and will you remain standing? And I get all the relatives to stand. Then I say to our whole church, if you're willing to stand behind this person, pray for him or her, now you stand on their behalf right now. Then I asked the audience to be seated and then I baptize the person. So we get the people at our church who'd never come, but (inaudible)...and so they're there. (mmh) And then we instruct the person being baptized, after he gets dressed and goes back out and sits in the congregation, that when I finish preaching and we stand up to sing the song of invitation, that they, as soon as the invitation starts, step out to the aisle wherever they are and come forward to where I am, to get their baptismal certificate. But also I say another reason I want you to do this is that if there's a person out there the holy spirit is speaking to about committing their lives today, and they're having a battle with themselves, the very fact they see you walking down the aisle kindly opens the aisle for them. And so we do it for that reason. And at the end of the service I have this person that's just been baptized stand up and I uh, pull out the beautiful recognition certificate we give them, and read it to the congregation, read the person's name again, and if they have family members present, I say come on down and stand by this member of your family, whether they're members of our church or not, we ask them to do it. (mmmh) They get down there, and when we say Amen, several of our people will come and shake hands with all these.

Jim: Uh, let me just ask you, you've been in this church for two years, you pastored 27 years, approximately. What...what do you think about the membership of this particular church, uh, compare the membership of two years ago to today, and I'm not just talking about numbers, I'm talking about the type of people uh, has there been a turnover in the church, different kinds of people now, that are, that were not here before....just....

Wade: We've had very few people leave the church because we're not in the area of move in and move outs, it's just stationary, which is makes it humanly more difficult to reach people. Uh, and

we've not had any fusses, so people haven't left from that account. In fact, you remember in the New Testament in the book of Acts, over and over he kept using the phrase 'one accord', (mmm-hmm), the church has to be that way to win people to Christ. So the people themselves who were here already have turned over spiritually, from the standpoint many of them have come to see themselves as evangelists, as witnesses, and uh, have sought and desired training, we've had about six different kinds of training to help this people, to know how to use their New Testament, to uh, give the good news of Christ to others. And then the new people who've come in, uh, many of these, were won by personal witness or the personal witness plus the public preaching. And it wasn't unusual for them to feel like I ought to able to witness to others, because they were saved in this kind of atmosphere. But I think the main change in the church has been the people recognizing our one, number one job is to win people to Christ, so whatever we're doing, that must be the purpose of it. Whatever changes we need to make we make it because of that. (mmm-hmm)

Jim: Uh...do you think that people who are carrying this message or doing the mission or obeying the great commission or going out and telling people, the people that are influenced by them, of course, we know that God is doing the work through his people. Uh....I want to make sure I phrase this properly. Do you think people of an economic level or economic strata tend to gravitate to that same level in their church activities? In other words, middle class blue collar worker in Ceredo, West Virginia, would he tend to gravitate to that type of person in witnessing to him uh, and would that be a good basis to say that the majority of the people in your church, 1st Baptist of Ceredo, are that level of people? You understand the question?

Wade: Uh, yes...(pause)...the largest number of prospects for salvation that a person will probably ever know if he is an adult when he is saved, is right after he'd been saved, because he has all these friends and relationships that he had before he became a Christian. And uh, two or three years ago a book came out called, "Concentric Circles", and there's a graft in there of these circles showing here's your immediate family right here in the center, there your responsibility and here is other brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and then it spreads on out to friends and those you work with and those who live in your block and so on. And uh, usually people have friends in the same economic ground that they themselves are living in. And so it becomes the norm then that they witness to the people that they know. So it's not so much that they're gravitating in that they're already there. These are the people they know; these are the ones who are their friends, uh, ones who are their relatives and you find a large majority of them are about the same economic level. New Testament churches I think, as we study them, uh, reach people on all levels but uh, in that the (inaudible)...Jesus says, we can assume in the early churches that most of the people who came to Christ were as Paul said in 1st Corinthians, they were in the nobody's (inaudible), and God took the nobody's to astound the somebody's. So in our church uh, we are middle and down

(mmm-hmm), not middle and upper (mmm-hmm). And we've not proven outside of that and maybe we shouldn't, because this church sat here with a building that doesn't look very good, and with a program that wasn't very alive...I think is the reason that uh, the 1st Baptist Church and the city next door reached the business people of the communities, and the lawyers and the doctors and so on. And they go there. (mmm-hmm) And so when one of that type moves into this area, it's the norm for him to go to that church. Because these are the people he makes friends with. (mmm-hmm) And they find about him...find out about him when he moves in. We have one lawyer, we have a lot of school teachers, we have some engineers, we have a good many people on welfare. And we have a good many senior citizens who are living uh, on social security. One of the things that has happened to our church you mention economic realm, uh, is the jump in the amount of money given by the people. Uh, whereas the whole income of this church was \$3.00 dollars for the (inaudible)...ending in the fall of '82. uh, we have probably jumped from an income of 200,000 dollars a year (that's quite a leap), and I think this is the norm when people get revived spiritually, it affects their (inaudible)... Jesus said more about uh, material things in our relation to them than he said about anything else while he was here. So, it's very vital in part of my preaching and teaching has been in this realm. For the first time this church had an all out program of asking every member to make a financial commitment to the Lord, to his church and write it down on a card and sign it. And uh, in this section of West Virginia and Kentucky and Ohio there's a real resistance to that. And there's a resistance in human nature to it anywhere. But uh, in the excitement of what the Lord was doing we had uh, a very minimum of resistance to that. And so when we came to talk about building a new building that they'd been talking about for 30 years probably, I led them to decide we'd build a debt-free (mmh), so we expect on the hundredth anniversary, 1987, enter the new auditorium, no cost over half a million dollars, debt-free. Our congregation you would think economically would not do that. (mmm-hmm) The uh, stewardship commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, located in Nashville, Tennessee has said to us that we may be the leading church in America on the standpoint of commitments to the building on a percentage basis. Now we got in on the 32, only 32 of the churches even get into the realm we got in, of reaching the 5th goal: we set up five different goals called the hallelujah goal. And uh, but we in cash and commitments committed over a half a million dollars to be paid in three years time (mmm). And we're not just coming to the end of the first year and we're not far behind the schedule of the money coming in. But I...our home mission board for the Southern Baptist Convention getting back to your question about uh, people gravitating (mmm-hmm), say that a church in America does not reach over two kinds of people. And one of them will be very dominant, be a very large majority in the ethnic realm. Uh, if you have anglos, you have few blacks. If you have a black church, you'll have very few anglos. Or even comes to Spanish speaking people or Chinese, when I worked in California we had many nationalities. On a given Sunday, Southern baptists preached 80 different languages in America today. Because we all work in all 50 states.

But a church. I'm not saying what it ought to do, just what it does do. We don't reach a wide...area of types of people. And so this church probably is not gonna reach wealthy people for some time to come. After we get a beautiful auditorium we may reach a few more of those who move into the community. Uh, in the course of the years it may begin to change some. But if we do, then we'll probably cease reaching the large majority on the lower economic realm. And someone needs to reach those. And as Southern Baptist we have pretty well educated ourselves outside of reaching them. Or if not education, we've let education keep us from having the kind of empathy with those people, and compassion for them. I think the apostle Paul was highly educated. But I believe he helped to win people on all strata. (mmm-hmm) But it's a fact of life in America, that a given church reaches only type of people predominantly. And just a few of the other type.

Jim: Let me just ask you one other thing, and this calls for an opinion, I know, and it may not be objective but in your two year experience with 1st Baptist Church in Ceredo, would you classify them as a typical church, by that I mean I think every church is unique. I don't think there's any question every portion of the body of Christ is unique, there's no question about that. But from uh, a historical standpoint, would this church be classified as a typical or unique...if it is unique, why so? What makes it different?

Wade: I think it's unique, and a number of people that it has led to Christ in two years time. Uh, leading 200 people to Christ in two years and being the (inaudible)...starting out they tell me they can remember two years ago when they'd have on Sunday morning, in the summer, about 35 people would be present. Well, Sunday morning we were using the balcony here in the middle of summer. Uh, but still that's not a whole lot. We probably didn't have over 150 there Sunday morning, but it was a big jump from 35 to 150. (mmm) Uh, but I think the most unique thing about it, it is commitment to evangelism. The big church, by that I mean, one has a thousand to two thousand in Sunday School, which we have a good many, as you know, the Southern Baptist convention do do that. (mmm-hmm) If on the same percentage basis they were winning to Christ, they would have to baptize a thousand people a year to match what we're doing baptizing a hundred people a year. So, I'd say it's unique.

Jim: One...tape is about ended, so I want to thank you for your time, and there's much more I know you could say but uh, I appreciate...

Wade: Well, I may have talked so much I missed some of the questions you needed to ask.

Jim: Not really. I think our conversation was valuable and uh, I want to thank you for your time. And this is the end of the interview with Dr. Wade Armstrong, pastor of the 1st Baptist Church in Ceredo on July the 25th, 1984.

WVC.C.5

WEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITIES - CEREO

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: ~~Richard Hodge~~ ^{D. WADE ARMSTRONG}

CONDUCTED BY: Jim Deeter

TRANSCRIBED & TYPED BY: Gina Kehali Kates

DATE OF INTERVIEW: July ²⁵ 23, 1984

Jim: This is a conversation with Dr. Wade Armstrong, the pastor of First Baptist Church in Ceredo. And this is Jim Deeter, interviewing Dr. Armstrong. And this is un, a tape for the Oral History department at Marshall University and un, partial fulfillment for the course history 580, History of Ceredo. This conversation is being recorded at his home in Ceredo on July the 25th, 1984. Dr. Armstrong, I would just like to ask you first, if you would, to just un, tell me a little bit about yourself, your background, uh, where you grew up, where you went to school, your family, and so forth; just share those kinds of things if you would.

Wade: Jim, I'm a native of Arkansas, I grew up on a farm. My dad was a farmer and a coal miner combination. I un, received Christ when I was 13, after having been a church member 3 years prior to that. And un, 3 or 4 years before I received Christ I knew I was being called to preach. I didn't answer his call until between my sophomore and junior years in high school, and started preaching immediately with the help from a associational missionary who took me around to various churches. This was near Fort Smith, Arkansas, west of Little Rock. When I finished high school un, by the way, I became pastor my junior senior years in high school; I was pastor of churches. And I went on to (inaudible)...Baptist University which is the baptist college for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. And un, did 4 years there and was pastor of churches all the way through college. Then I went to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky and was pastor all during my un, graduate years there (phone ringing in background) and un, got the first degree in three years and the record second degree the next year and about 3 years later well, I did the un, work required of resident doctrinal students, which was 2 years resident work on campus, and un, passed my oral exam and went on to become pastor in Oklahoma City. And un, took leaves or absences un, un, once every two years until I finished a thesis and got my final un, Ph.D degree in 1955, from Oklahoma City I became (inaudible)...another Oral Center and from there went on to be director of evangelism for the California Baptist, Southern Convention. And worked at that for about seven years. And then when my wife died and I had young children, I remarried, I became pastor in Los Angeles and then in Sacramento. Then in '71, I began to lecture missions in West Palm Beach, Florida and after serving about 9 years there, I became director of missions in Durham, North Carolina. And un, there my second wife died of cancer and un, when I remarried this time we decided to come to ministry in West Virginia. I became first to work with the state staff and the (inaudible)...of evangelism and stewardship and after 6 months from the middle of 1982, and to the end of 1982, I served all over the state. In the meantime, I became interim pastor here at First Baptist Ceredo and un, preached on weekends and on Wednesday nights, when I did not have other appointments out of the state. But the Word began to open doors here un, and around of His spiritual awakening among the people and un, among (inaudible)...people and it became an unusual flood of lost people attending and being saved. In a church that was well, over 90 years of age at that time, and had never as far

as I could tell from the history I have read uh, been an outstanding evangelistic church, suddenly becoming alive and I accepted uh, rather easily some very substantial changes, agreed to become an outreaching body. When they uh, first asked me to consider being pastor I felt the Lord didn't bring me to West Virginia to be a pastor and uh, so I turned 'em down. They went on pursuing others and finally called a man. But one week before he was to arrive, he uh, accepted a teaching job instead. So they turned back to me and in the meantime the Lord told me that he did want me here as pastor and I think part of what he used to convince me was uh, a big crust of evangelism that he was making possible. It's usual Jim, that here in a community that's really hemmed in and uh, on a human level we'd say is nearly impossible to grow a church here. Now, we have the Ohio River on one side and Big Sandy Creek and Kentucky on the other side; then we have the airport on the other side, then we have a vacant land between us and Huntington and growing fast like you find most churches that grow rapidly because uh, the community is growing rapidly at least that helps in the growth. But the Lord uh, for his own reason chose to touch this people at this time and a church that have averaged between 10 and 20 probably per year in baptizing, uh, suddenly began to reach a lot of people for the size church that it is. And uh, this July I've been uh, associated with the church 2 years, year and a half, as pastor and half a year as interim pastor and there'd been a little over 200 professions of faith in these 2 years. And we baptize a little over 15% of those 200. So his uh, made a remarkable turnaround in evangelism. We've done several things up to Lord used to do this first of all, I asked the deacons to revive the family minister plan that they'd had some years ago, but never did really get active in where every deacon has a number of families that are his families to visit uh, about once a quarter. I asked them to help each other and to take one zone of families per week and visit every family in that zone. Every deacon and wife would participate with a deacon and wife who was head of that zone and ask every home where they went, besides having bible reading and prayer and encouraging them that way to ask them if they would come and be the deacon and wives' guest for dinner next Sunday. And be recognized at the morning service and to bring all their family and any relatives and friends they wanted to. And many of those people who had not been attending began to come and uh, several of the homes of the lost members and they came with the families. And uh, it was good fellowship at these lunches that immediately followed. It took uh, about 10 weeks to go, 10-13, I forgot how many were active deacons or at that time we have 17 now. There were probably about 9 at that time. But that helped us to win a lot of people. Then we put on 13 week Sunday School high tennis campaign and told 'em that the old frame building that will be torn down will not (inaudible)....it was built and the only building next to them they've ever known because it's the only building the church has ever had. They've expanded twice but it's the same building. It will have given them a picture or that or the plate if they attend 12 or 13 Sundays in a row, 3 months, counting in Sunday School. Whereas uh, the Sunday school had been learning 120 (inaudible)...extra concepts around 120. On

250 13 Sundays in a row. That got some people in the habit of attending. And there are some habits that are good. You usually think of habits as bad, but that's not necessarily so. (un-nuh) Hebrews 10:25 says that do not have a habit of forsaking the assembling of yourselves together. So uh, the deacons working and then the Sunday school leadership beginning to work, and the two put together made uh, I think a lot of difference. On Wednesday nights, we started uh, fellowship dinners on Wednesday nights, and in connection with our Wednesday night services we also had outreach visitation, instead of asking the people to give another night during the week, we'd either go on Wednesday night. We'd have a short bible reading, prayer time bible study, prayer time, and then the team would (inaudible)... We sent them out in teams of three, one man and 2 women, or 2 women and one man. A lady at the door comes more to opening at night, if a woman opens the door and sees the woman standing there in her door, so all the people who are not coming, we are returning their visits, and besides going to people we found about who had never attended. We have a way at our church of finding out who's present. We don't ask visitors to stand up or raise their hands, or we ask all of our members to stand in their honor. So, everyone who's seated we know is not a member, and the second thing we do we ask everybody to fill out a registration envelope. The front side is for guest, and besides name, address, phone, it has two very important questions, it says are you sure you're saved, and it has three places, one of which will be them, it says yes, undecided, no, and (inaudible).... And that lets us know in their own handwriting how they feel about their own salvation. The next question says are you interested in joining this church, yes, undecided, no, and we see them move from not to undecided to yes, but also what this does it make a person suddenly face up to himself when he fills out his envelope, how do I really stand? One young man who's now a deacon, in fact, he is the husband of our secretary, Rae, you've talked with (un-nuh). He said this made him face up to the fact that he was lost. (nuh) And there Sunday by Sunday, he'd been coming to this church 10 years, nobody would come and witness to him, he said, they'd come and talk to him about ballgames and the, then invite him to church, but when he started filling out that envelope, are you sure you're saved, he faced up to the fact that he knew he was not saved, and got on (inaudible)...and saw (inaudible)...minister of youth and I called in his home and before I accepted the call I started to sense something, the Lord had him ready, and he grew rapidly and was made a deacon then. There was this one example of (inaudible)....that faced up to the fact that they were lost when they filled out the card, and you don't have to wonder who the woman was in the pink dress or the man in the green tie that tell 'ya in their own handwritings who they were and how they feel about themselves spiritually, and the fact then on the other side of that envelope, the backside is for our own members, and I told our members uh, this inner circle first, why we need to do this. That if they'd fill out their envelopes, people around them would fill theirs out, uh...so even though it would get tiresome to do it Sunday morning, and Sunday night, and Sunday morning and Sunday

nights, Sunday in and Sunday out. We had a reason for doing that beyond themselves. Of course, one thing it made them face up to themselves. We've had several church members saved and across America that's going on among churches that become alive evangelistically they find several or their own members trying to acknowledge I've never come to Christ. We had a deacon who came, received Christ and was baptized (inaudible)....with the New Testament believers baptism. He'd had uh, mental problems and I think part of it is that he'd been a lost man. (Hm) We have a woman, very fine person who's a widow now, retired school teacher. Highly respected in this community, who one night walked out of the choir where she was singing and said, pastor, may I have the microphone? And I said, yeah, Ruth, sure. And she said, I want to confess Christ openly over this microphone. I've been a member of this church for many, many years. I've tried to lead a good life, I've taught the Bible, I've sung in the choir, but I've never personally asked Christ to be my Savior and I ask him right now to save me. (nm) And she made her confession right there and was baptized. And we had other church members who came and other deacons' wives in fact, two deacons' wives who came and said I don't care what people think about this, that I've been a deacon's wife all this time and I wanna be sure I'm in Christ and I'm receiving him and I'm asking him now, save me. I remember joining church but I never remember asking him to save me. So, revival was on, we've done some other things to get lost people present. We started an annual recognition of various groups who work in and out of the cities. We recognized all the fireman (hm), all the policemen, we recognized the city council people, and the mayor's of the two cities of Ceredo and Kenova. And that gets them and their families present, we write them and our deacons telephone them and then uh, we have a, one year we had just a fellowship affair after church with just cake and cookies and something to drink, but this year we gave them a meal. Fellowship meal following the morning service. And then uh, we visited the teachers in Wayne County elementary, middle, high school. Vocational schools. And wrote them all letters. And many of them came. And filling out the registration envelopes, we found out about these people, who was uh, active for Christ already and who were not. So we'd done various things to help expose the gospel to lost people inside the church building and then we had uh, 75 people at a time going out on Wednesday night in this visitation (nm), now it's unusual for a big church to have 75 people as we both know but because we organized and asked a person will you head up a team, will you get two people to work with you, we enlisted all these and said yes, I will, and we had a starting time we had a stopping time. We'd only go about 3 months at a time with the visitation and uh, this got out in homes or people. So it began to spread all around that something unusual was taking place and it was so unusual that some people when they'd have to miss, they'd telephone and say what happened...(laughter)...on Sunday. And then the tone of our service uh, changed to, from uh, what many people think is worship, became a celebrated type of worship service, the kind that the Bible spells out that will be in Heaven. And so the people coming in and sitting quietly, listening to sort organ

music, they now come in laughing, chatting and talking with one another and shaking hands with any visitor they see and having a good time for about 15 minutes before the choir marches in. And uh, I preach expositively, I don't preach very often a topical sermon. And uh, people are now bringing their Bibles and following so it's a, it's a teaching preaching type what I'm doing. Very opposite to what I used to do. But the Lord will use that, too. He has said that his word would return void, and uh, we're finding that to be true. We provide both print, the old document and uh, present English, today's English version that we use because the people can understand it. And the many people we cannot take for granted know anything about the Bible really. And they certainly can't understand the old English that they don't speak any more very well. So uh, like this very last Sunday morning, by the ends of the pew's laying down the floor were stacks of these large New Testaments and when I got up to read the word, I said now, reach down you who's sitting in the aisles and pick those up and pass them to the people who doesn't already have his and I said to the people, there are so many translations today in the English language that we need to use one so that you can follow my preaching much more easier when I point out a word in a certain verse it will be the same word in your translation if you have the same one. And so uh, nearly everyone then will have a copy of God's word in his hand when I'm preaching. Another good change that has happened to help us to reach people has been in the realm of music. I've talked already about education and how the Sundays has grown. I said before I leave education I guess, well, talk about the fact that uh, we felt like people need to have a foundation in their lives to go spiritually after they were saved. And even if they'd been saved several years. Those who attend a normal Bible class in our Sunday schools don't learn a great deal uh, they get some good atmosphere but as far as actual Bible knowledge and so on, their examination shows they don't know much. So we felt like on Sunday night we should have a church training time an hour before the evening preaching now in which we gave uh, foundation (inaudible)...that would help a Christian to grow. Such as uh, beginning to start reading the word every day, have a time to do it, have a prayer light, begin to grow a prayer light and uh, make a list of those uh, you know who are lost and start praying for them. And begin to memorize some of God's word and then to know some principles that will help you to grow. And so we uh, got a piece of literature to use as a Bible guide called "Survival Kit for new Christians".

Jim: Un-huh.

Wade: But we asked the whole to study and we enrolled about 260 people on Wednesday uh, Sunday nights where many churches don't ever open their doors on Sunday nights. We got that many people enrolled and the attendance I guess, ran around close to 200. by having many classes and giving the person who was going to teach the class a list of names and paying call all these they're the ones who oughta be in your class. And we had a lot of spiritual growth going on in those 13 weeks that we went through that survival kit. In a few weeks we'll be starting Survival Kit

And they acknowledge with me that principles don't change, methods do, principles don't; they're the same with every generation. One of the principles we found was uh, prayer. First Church did a lot of praying on the principles of personal witnessing. Every day the Bible talks about them going house to house, and it talked about the public preaching and the kind that it was, persuasive preaching and penetrating and scriptural and evangelistic. Many churches, if they're going to have long hair music and anthems that people can't understand and sermons that uh, are not pointed to lost people, they do it on Sunday morning, but Sunday morning is about the only time in America that lost people go to church. So, I said to our people, let's get to what's going on and when do our people come, and they all acknowledged with me if we have them they're usually on Sunday morning an evangelistic service, and Sunday night maybe more of a teaching service to our own people, so it hasn't been unusual, the unusual thing now is not when people come down the aisle, it's when nobody comes down the aisle. I'm glad it's turned around that way, that's the unusual time when we don't have open decisions. We're beginning in August, uh, Jim, something that I think will help this church and help some lives in this church, all the rest of their lives will begin what is called continuous witnessing training, that's burning the _____ convention of CWT (Continuous Witness Training). It's a 13 week training program of training a person how to personally witness to others. It requires uh, a 2-hour class a week, it requires a good amount of memorization of the scriptures, it requires a memorizing of _____. And an outline of how to give a gospel and how to bring the person to a decision. And uh, to take to this one must promise that once he enrolls, he won't drop out and he will be there all 13 times. It's a 2-hour study and then they go out and visit for an hour and a half, the team of three. One is the teacher and 2 are the learners. We're starting out with a staff taking special training, then we're going to come back from these teams and for 13 weeks this fall, there will be 18 of us then, 6 of us trained and then we'll go out in teams of 3 like the 18. At the end of the 18 weeks, 13 weeks, the 18 people as (inaudible)...will all know how to lead a person to Christ who wants to be saved. They will know how to lead him to Christ. Next spring those 18 people will take 2 a piece and for 13 weeks they will train and you get 3 times 18, you're getting a good many people involved. Then next fall all of those will take 2 a piece and we'll go again. I'm looking for the time by the time we center on our new team there will be a 188 new people in this church who will have a lifestyle of evangelism, to any day or their life under situations where the holy spirit places them with a person who would like to be saved, they can win him to Christ. And I feel in the New Testament the main emphasis is not on the public preaching, but on the public preaching, and (inaudible)...
END OF SIDE 1

SIDE 2

Wade:...I hope in the First Baptist Church of Ceredo, West Virginia, that where as (inaudible)....in most of our Southern Baptist churches and in several others of other groups that Christ

is really the priest in the pulpit. There's not much personal witnessing from the pew, and if they're lost and not present and the preacher preaches an evangelistic sermon they cannot be saved, and they're not going to come unless we go and the church has to be ...is ...ceases to be a coming organization and become a going organism, filled with the life of the holy spirit, and this is what the New Testament teaches about the church. It's my intention which I pointed out in the book I wrote, the two kinds of churches. There are maintenance churches and there are mission churches. Churches on maintenance and churches on mission. A church on maintenance is a church that maintains a building, they maintain services, and they maintain some routines, but that is the end of what they do, is just to maintain. (inaudible)....some organizations and some programs. They don't have much intention beyond that, and therefore, don't do much beyond that. And they only remain alive because someone prior to that had something else in mind instead of just maintenance, but as the church went along it just became a maintenance institution. The churches of rich people are churches who are on mission, the mission that Jesus gave his church to make disciples. Now they seek to turn everything they do...to missions, like Jesus told us to do. I do believe there is a growing of a battle between growing to a Christian, or growing Christians and un, witnessing to lost people. I think they go hand in hand. And I do not believe there's any real spiritual growth that doesn't have for its purpose witnessing to the gospel of Christ. Well, this is what he taught us. He said that's why he's gonna give us the holy spirit, because we were witnesses. And by him we'd have power. And this is the purpose of the one who lives on the inside of us, to help us to be powerful in witnessing. Then that's sure the purpose I want the individual, the collective individuals who make the church. So these are some of the things, then, that the Lord has led us to put together, that has helped this church to turn around. I'd like to pay tribute to a group of men, called deacons. Not one of them that I know has ever bowed his neck against the leadership of the pastor, or against an outreach ministry, but they've all been just right for it. And this has been an unusual thing, I think, because usually when a church has been set a certain way for years upon years, to suddenly in a space or few months, to turn all the way around, and cease to be a church on maintenance to become a church on mission, that there are people that don't understand this, who don't want to understand this, they don't want their church to be that way. Well, these men, thank God, have not been that kind of men. Un, they participated in the outreach ministries, they pray for us, they feel a part of the team, and un, their influence among the membership then, that means a great deal in our going in this direction. We try to get the church to take a rather long look, by having some seminars I guess you could call them, planned programs of growth, or planned directions--long range planning. Un, in which we try to look, not only at the immediate, but at several years ahead, where should this church be and how should we try to get there? I think this has helped some. We have not done any of these things as well as they could have or should have been done, but the fact that we've done 'em some the holy spirit has

blessed and used the people and used these methods and so on, to get out the gospel to many and to help individuals to begin to grow as children of God. Maybe you have some questions you'd like to ask.

Jim: Well, you've been a pastor, well, you've had pastoral experience for how many years did you say?

Wade: Well, this August and you can help me find out. I started preaching in 1937 (okay), in August, 1937, seven from fourteen is seven, so it looks like I'm gonna celebrate my 47th year in the ministry (that sounds about right). Now I was uh, '57 to uh, '63 I was director of evangelism, so I wasn't a pastor in California at that time. So that's uh, about seven years out there. And then I was nine years in Florida, that's 16 years, and I was three years in North Carolina, that's nineteen years, so 19-20 years of my 47 years I was what we call denominational (mmm-hmm, so about 27...) about 27 years I've been a pastor.

Jim: Do you ...when you first contacted, or were contacted, was contacted by 1st Baptist here at Ceredo, uh, you mentioned in your comments that you found them to be a church on maintenance, you meant by that that they were just where they had been for several years?

Wade: Yeah, they were just maintaining services and property and programs.

Jim: Can you give me some idea of, based on your past experience, or your years in the ministry, why that takes place? Is there any explanation?

Wade: I think it takes place positively or negatively in the pulpit. God's work centers around his leaders, I think the New Testament teaches that every church needs a pastor. He's called a bishop in the New Testament, that means overseen. It's like Truman said, 'The Buck stops here'. And it does, with a pastor. If he's an outreaching person in his uh, spiritual philosophy and if he's a personal soul winner, and if he preaches this way and preaches the scripture to the people, they begin to walk the same direction. (inaudible)...churches like the pastor, same may become like him more quickly than that. But if at the end of seven years the church is not winning anyone to Christ, you can pretty well say the pastor's not winning anyone to Christ. The church is not an outreaching church and you can pretty well say he's not an outreaching pastor. So I think number one has to do with who the pastor is. Now, there's no two people alike, as we know, there's no two pastors alike. And that's not saying we're supposed to fit a certain groove, but we all have the same commission. And uh, the scripture still says to the pastor do the work of an evangelist. So, that's mandatory, and imperative. And I don't think a pastor has any choice about it. If he's gonna be true to the New Testament, because the easiest thing to avoid in the flesh, the devil sees to that, the world about us sees it and many Christians about us. It's all opposed to where we are in

Christianity in America today. So you have to...have to become abnormal to become normal in American Christianity. (mmm)

Because our normalcy uh, we have not recognized as being sub-normal but when you become normal, you're abnormal to most people. It's normal to witness for Christ according to the New Testament. So I think uh, well, that last pastor (inaudible)...said to me, I'm not a preacher really. And while he was here he took courses up to Marshall because he wanted to be in the counseling ministry and a chaplain in the hospital, and uh, so he didn't feel himself strong in the pulpit. But I think though we don't have the same emotional buildup, and a lot of things about us aren't the same, we have the same gospel, and uh, the same word of God, and I think with some real compassion given by the holy spirit, and given by concentrating by the state of person outside of Christ, that any Christian and certainly a God-called preacher, can preach with passion and desire, that can be seen and felt in his appearance and in his message. God can use us to bring people under conviction. He doesn't have to be an orator. Uh, but many pastors don't try to preach that way. But I feel the New Testament preachin' was that way. And that this is the normal preaching that we ought to have. And then it must go from the pastor to the leaders. In Baptist Churches, as you know, this would be deacons and Bible teachers in the Sunday school, principally. And if these will walk with the pastor in the direction of evangelism, then many others begin to do this. We found the Lord doing here what uh, he did in the New Testament churches; I believe in the 10th chapter of Acts it tells of Cornelius, a gentile here in the gospel, by Peter and others, but when they arrived at his home, he had congregated there, not only his immediate family, but many others that made the house (inaudible), in the New Testament for house, meant a lot more than his own personal family. All the men that worked under him, and their families and so on, hard to tell how many he had present. And uh, not only Cornelius but those other people received Christ and were filled with the holy spirit. And the 16th chapter of Acts it tells of the Philippian jailer, and talks about his house, which would be more than his own immediate family. There would be several others. And uh, in the same 16th chapter of Acts it talks about a woman who's heart the Lord opened, Lydia, and her whole house came to Christ. This would be several of the women who were working with her in the business and the families and so on. Well, here, we have found that God's saving one or two people, and whole group or other friends and relatives begin to come and begin to be saved. That's one of the things that helped us to reach some more people beyond the ordinary bounds of the church. They brought 'em in from Huntington, from across the river, in Ohio and Kentucky. Because uh, as you know, statistics show people go to church number one reason because some person asked them. (mmm) Not because where the church is located, not because of who the preacher is, not because of the nicety of the buildings. They were asked by someone in that church. So as these and by the way, we helped them to ask because when a person is saved and becomes a candidate for baptism, we talk to him or her prior and see. I get all their family present to see you baptized, ask all your friends, ask your grandmother and granddaddy, everybody you can.

And we tell 'em why. Not just to see you baptized but they'll hear the gospel. But they might never come unless you say, "I'm gonna be baptized, will you come to see me baptized"? And put it that way. (mmm-hmm) I've been thinking of printing up invitations for them to hand out. Episcopalians do this on the stand when they're going to so-called baptize a baby. They have printed invitations sent to their friends, and families, come see their baby baptized. So, here, we baptize at the beginning of a service and make it a part of the service. And the lights go down and we walk 'em down to the water and the choir has marched in and the deacons has marched in or are sitting in the front rows, and uh, I explain that water doesn't wash away any sins, that the blood of Christ does that. But that this person is being buried and raised, (inaudible)...to save sinners. And we try to preach the gospel from the water, as well as let them see the gospel. And uh, I introduce the person and I say, uh, if they've told me who's present, their family, I call out their names if I can remember, and say, I understand so and so is here, will you stand up? We want to recognize you and will you remain standing? And I get all the relatives to stand. Then I say to our whole church, if you're willing to stand behind this person, pray for him or her, now you stand on their behalf right now. Then I asked the audience to be seated and then I baptize the person. So we get, the people at our church who'd never come, but (inaudible)...and so they're there. (mmh) And then we instruct the person being baptized, after he gets dressed and goes back out and sits in the congregation, that when I finish preaching and we stand up to sing the song of invitation, that they, as soon as the invitation starts, step out to the aisle wherever they are and come forward to where I am, to get their baptismal certificate. But also I say another reason I want you to do this is that if there's a person out there the holy spirit is speaking to about committing their lives today, and they're having a battle with themselves, the very fact they see you walking down the aisle kindly opens the aisle for them. And so we do it for that reason. And at the end of the service I have this person that's just been baptized stand up and I uh, pull out the beautiful recognition certificate we give them, and read it to the congregation, read the person's name again, and if they have family members present, I say come on down and stand by this member of your family, whether they're members of our church or not, we ask them to do it. (mmh) They get down there, and when we say Amen, several of our people will come and shake hands with all these.

Jim: Uh, let me just ask you, you've been in this church for two years, you pastored 27 years, approximately. What...what do you think about the membership of this particular church, uh, compare the membership of two years ago to today, and I'm not just talking about numbers, I'm talking about the type of people uh, has there been a turnover in the church, different kinds of people now, that are, that were not here before....just....

Wade: We've had very few people leave the church because we're not in the area of move in and move outs, it's just stationary, which is makes it humanly more difficult to reach people. Uh, and

we've not had any russes, so people haven't left from that account. In fact, you remember in the New Testament in the book of Acts, over and over he kept using the phrase 'one accord', (mmmm-hmm), the church has to be that way to win people to Christ. So the people themselves who were here already have turned over spiritually, from the standpoint many of them have come to see themselves as evangelists, as witnesses, and uh, have sought and desired training, we've had about six different kinds of training to help this people, to know how to use their New Testament, to uh, give the good news of Christ to others. And then the new people who've come in, uh, many of these, were won by personal witness or the personal witness plus the public preaching. And it wasn't unusual for them to feel like I ought to be able to witness to others. Because they were saved in this kind of atmosphere. But I think the main change in the church has been the people recognizing our one, number one job is to win people to Christ, so whatever we're doing, that must be the purpose of it. Whatever changes we need to make we make it because of that. (mmmm-hmm)

Jim: Uh...do you think that people who are carrying this message or doing the mission or obeying the great commission or going out and telling people, the people that are influenced by them, of course, we know that God is doing the work through the people. Uh....I want to make sure I phrase this right. People of an economic level or economic strata tend to gravitate to that same level. In other words, an individual in some nation, making \$1000 a year, a worker in Ceredo, West Virginia, would he tend to gravitate to that type of person in witnessing to him uh, and would that be a good basis to say that the majority of the people in your church, 1st Baptist of Ceredo, are that level of people? You understand the question?

Wade: Uh, yes...(pause)...the largest number of prospects for salvation that a person will probably ever know if he is an adult when he is saved, is right after he'd been saved, because he has all these friends and relationships that he had before he became a Christian. And uh, two or three years ago a book came out called, "Concentric Circles", and there's a graph in there of these circles showing here's your immediate family right here in the center, there your responsibility and here is other brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and then it spreads on out to friends and those you work with and those who live in your block and so on. And uh, usually people have friends in the same economic ground that they themselves are living in. And so it becomes the norm then that they witness to the people that they know. So it's not so much that they're gravitating in, that they're already there. These are the people they know; these are the ones who are their friends, uh, ones who are their relatives and you find a large majority of them are about the same economic level. New Testament churches I think, as we study them, uh, reach people on all levels but uh, in that the (inaudible)...Jesus says, we can assume in the early churches that most of the people who came to Christ were as Paul said in 1st Corinthians, they were in the nobodys (inaudible), and God took the nobodys to astound the somebodys. So in our church uh, we are middle and down (mmmm-hmm),

not middle and upper (mmmm-mmnn). And we've not broken outside of that and maybe we shouldn't, because this church sat here with a building that doesn't look very good, and with a program that wasn't very alive...I think is the reason that uh, the 1st Baptist Church and the city next door reached the business people of the communities, and the lawyers and the doctors and so on. And they go there. (mmmm-mmnn) And so when one of that type moves into this area, it's the norm for him to go to that church. Because these are the people he makes friends with. (mmmm-mmnn) And they find about him...find out about him when he moves in. We have one lawyer, we have a lot of school teachers, we have some engineers, we have a good many people on welfare. And we have a good many senior citizens who are living uh, on social security. One of the things that has happened to our church you mention economic realm, uh, is the jump in the amount of money given by the people. Uh, whereas the whole income of this church was \$3.50 dollars for the (inaudible)...ending in the fall of '62. Uh, we have probably jumped from an income of 200,000 dollars a year (that's quite a leap), and I think this is the norm when people get revived spiritually, it affects their (inaudible).... Jesus said more about uh, material things in our relation to them than he said about anything else while he was here. So, it's very vital in part of my preaching and teaching has been in this realm. For the first time this church had an all out program of asking every member to make a financial commitment to the Lord, to his church and write it down on a card and sign it. And uh, in this section of West Virginia and Kentucky and Ohio there's a real resistance to that. And there's a resistance in human nature to it anywhere. But uh, in the excitement of what the Lord was doing we had uh, a very minimum of resistance to that. And so when we came to talk about building a new building that they'd been talking about for 30 years probably, I led them to decide we'd build a debt-free (mmnn), so we expect on the hundredth anniversary, 1987, enter the new auditorium, no cost over half a million dollars, debt-free. Our congregation you would think economically would not do that. (mmmm-mmnn) The uh, stewardship commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, located in Nashville, Tennessee has said to us that we may be the leading church in America on the standpoint of commitments to the building on a percentage basis. Now we got in on the 3%, only 3% of the churches ever get into the realm we got in, of reaching the 5th goal; we set up five different goals called the hallelujah goal. And uh, but we in cash and commitments committed over a half a million dollars to be paid in three years time (mmmm). And we're not just coming to the end of the first year and we're not far behind the schedule of the money coming in. But I...our home mission board for the Southern Baptist Convention getting back to your question about uh, people gravitating (mmmm-mmnn), say that a church in America does not reach over two kinds of people. And one of them will be very dominant, be a very large majority in the ethnic realm. Uh, if you have anglos, you have few blacks. If you have a black church, you'll have very few anglos. Or even comes to Spanish speaking people or Chinese, when I worked in California we had many nationalities. On a given Sunday, Southern Baptists preached 30 different languages in America today. Because we all work in all 50 states.

But a church, I'm not saying what it ought to do, just what it does do. We don't reach a wide...area of types of people. And so this church probably is not gonna reach wealthy people for some time to come. After we get a beautiful auditorium we may reach a few more of those who move into the community. Uh, in the course of the years it may begin to change some. But if we do, then we'll probably cease reaching the large majority on the lower economic realm. And someone needs to reach those. And as Southern Baptist we have pretty well educated ourselves outside of reaching them. Or if not education, we've let education keep us from having the kind of empathy with those people, and compassion for them. I think the apostle Paul was highly educated. But I believe he helped to win people on all strata. (mmm-hmm) But it's a fact of life in America, that a given church reaches only type of people predominantly. And just a few of the other type.

Jim: Let me just ask you one other thing, and this calls for an opinion, I know, and it may not be objective but in your two year experience with 1st Baptist Church in Ceredo, would you classify them as a typical church, by that I mean I think every church is unique. I don't think there's any question every portion of the body of Christ is unique, there's no question about that. But from uh, a historical standpoint, would this church be classified as a typical or unique...if it is unique, why so? What makes it different?

Wade: I think it's unique, and a number of people that it has led to Christ in two years time. Uh, leading 200 people to Christ in two years and being the (inaudible)...starting out they tell me they can remember two years ago when they'd have on Sunday morning, in the summer, about 35 people would be present. Well, Sunday morning we were using the balcony here in the middle of summer. Uh, but still that's not a whole lot. We probably didn't have over 150 there Sunday morning, but it was a big jump from 35 to 150. (mmh) Uh, but I think the most unique thing about it, it is commitment to evangelism. The big church, by that I mean, one has a thousand to two thousand in Sunday School, which we have a good many, as you know, the Southern Baptist convention do do that. (mmm-hmm) If on the same percentage basis they were winning to Christ, they would have to baptize a thousand people a year to match what we're doing baptizing a hundred people a year. So, I'd say it's unique.

Jim: The...tape is about ended, so I want to thank you for your time, and there's much more I know you could say but uh, I appreciate...

Wade: Well, I may have talked so much I missed some of the questions you needed to ask.

Jim: Not really. I think our conversation was valuable and uh, I want to thank you for your time. And this is the end of the interview with Dr. Wade Armstrong, pastor of the 1st Baptist Church in Ceredo on July the 25th, 1984.